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Advancement of women

Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In resolution 63/155 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly reaffirmed the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and recognized that violence against women was rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and that all forms of violence against women constituted a major impediment to the ability of women to make use of their capabilities. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixty-fifth session, a report with information provided by States on their follow-up activities to implement the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. The report is divided into four parts: section I contains the introduction; section II covers the background; section III outlines the measures reported by Member States; and section IV contains the conclusions and recommendations.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 63/155 of 18 December 2008 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly urged States to end impunity for violence against women, and to continue to develop their national strategy and a more systematic, comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained approach in the fields of legislation, prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance and rehabilitation. The present report is submitted in accordance with the Assembly's request, in that resolution, and is based on information received from Member States. It covers the period since the last report (A/63/214 and Corr.1) up to 27 May 2010.

II. Background

2. The General Assembly has dealt with the issue of violence against women for a number of years. In recalling all its previous resolutions on the elimination of violence against women, the Assembly was concerned in 2008 about the pervasiveness of violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, noting that such violence seriously impaired or nullified women's enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, constituting a major impediment to the ability of women to make use of their capabilities. The Assembly also recognized that, conversely, women's poverty, lack of empowerment and marginalization placed them at increased risk of violence.

3. To protect women from such violence and break the cycle of violence, the General Assembly, in resolution 63/155, strongly condemned all acts of violence against women and girls, whether perpetrated by the State, private persons or non-State actors (para. 8); stressed that it was important that States refrained from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to elimination of violence against women (para. 9); stressed also that States must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and to provide protection to the victims (para. 10); and urged States to end impunity for violence against women by ensuring that women had equal protection of the law and equal access to justice (para. 11).

4. The General Assembly then put forward in the same resolution specific measures to be undertaken by States to end such violence, including, inter alia: improvements of legal framework, including the prohibition of sexual violence from amnesty provisions (para. 13); protecting and assisting victims, and investigating and punishing violence against women (para. 11); development of national strategies (para. 16); partnerships with civil society (para. 16 (t)); empowerment of women and awareness-raising among women of their rights (para. 15); training of all officials responsible for implementing policies and programmes aimed at preventing violence against women (para. 14); assistance to victims (para. 16 (m), (p) and (q)); data collection and monitoring (para. 16 (e)); and resource allocation (para. 16 (g) and (h)). The Assembly also called upon the entities of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and to better coordinate their work (para. 21).

5. Based on inputs received from Member States in response to a note verbale, the present report summarizes measures taken by States to address violence against women in relation to (a) international instruments, legislation and the criminal justice system (addressing in particular resolution 63/155, paras. 11, 12, 13, 16 (b), (c), (d), (k), (l) and (m) and 18)); (b) national action plans, strategies and national coordination mechanisms and collaboration (in particular para. 16 (a), (f), (g), (j), (n), (q) and (t)); (c) prevention measures, including awareness-raising and capacity-building (in particular paras. 14, 15, 16 (b), (h), (i), (j), (o) and (s)); (d) protection, support and services for victims/survivors (in particular paras. 15, 16 (l), (m), (p), (q) and (r)); and (e) data collection and analysis (in particular para. 16 (e)).

III. Measures reported by Member States

6. As of 27 May 2010, 54 Member States had responded to the Secretary-General's request for information relating to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/155.[1] Information was provided on a range of measures taken to address violence against women, including strengthening legal frameworks, adopting dedicated policies, reinforcing prevention action and efforts to prosecute perpetrators and protect and support victims.

A. International instruments, legislation and the criminal justice system

7. The international legal framework obligates and guides States in the adoption of their own laws to address violence against women. Member States drew attention to their adherence to a range of international instruments, including the international human rights treaties, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The suffering of women living under situations of occupation and the importance of respecting international humanitarian and human rights law in that context were also raised. Many States indicated their adherence to relevant regional instruments, such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Some States made reference to work under way in the Council of Europe on drafting a convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

8. Legislation provides the foundation for a holistic and effective approach to addressing violence against women. Many States have strengthened their national legal frameworks to prevent and address violence against women. However, lack of full and effective enforcement of the law remains a continuing challenge. An

[1] Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Georgia, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of the Congo, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Senegal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen.

increasing number of legal frameworks acknowledge violence against women as a form of gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's human rights. The right to a life free of violence has been incorporated in some constitutions, such as in the Constitution of Ecuador (article 66 (3)), which was revised in 2008. A noteworthy trend has been an increase in the adoption of comprehensive laws, which not only criminalize violence against women and call for the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, but also include measures related to the prevention of violence, the support and protection of victims/survivors, and implementation of the law (Argentina, Colombia, Georgia, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)). Other States have separate laws or legal provisions to protect and assist victims, covering, for example, compensation for damages (Austria and Switzerland) and support and services (Bulgaria, Japan, Norway, Philippines, Slovakia and Sweden), as well as to mandate prevention measures, such as education on the prevention of violence against women in schools and public awareness-raising measures on domestic violence (Republic of Korea and Serbia). Some of these laws address multiple forms of violence, while others focus on one form of violence, such as domestic violence.

9. Member States have amended their penal codes and/or adopted other laws to address violence against women. Definitions of violence against women have been expanded. For example, in many laws, definitions of domestic violence include physical, sexual, psychological and other types of violence, and extend to violence committed within relationships other than marriage (Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Georgia, Paraguay, Portugal and Switzerland). The definition of rape has been broadened in several countries, to include a greater range of constitutive acts, focusing also on consent rather than physical force; and applicable penalties increased (Bulgaria, Chile, Mauritius, Portugal and Senegal). A growing number of States are criminalizing marital rape (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile and Cyprus). Sentences and fines have been increased in relation to domestic violence (Cyprus, Mauritius, Norway and Tunisia), and aggravating circumstances have been introduced, such as the witnessing of violence by minors (Norway), and the victim's age and violence resulting in death of the victim (Portugal). Laws or special provisions have been increasingly adopted on sexual harassment (Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Mauritius, Portugal and Tunisia), some of which prohibit it not only in workplaces but also in educational institutions and other areas of public activity. An emerging trend is the adoption of legislation to specifically criminalize stalking (Italy). Several States have amended or are in the process of amending discriminatory provisions in criminal or personal status laws in relation to adultery, rape and polygamy (Iraq, Lebanon and Tunisia). States have incorporated provisions related to the protection of women from violence in laws on gender equality or equal rights (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Philippines), protection of women in general (China) and crime prevention (Belarus). Some new or amended laws have focused on the protection of children from sexual violence and abuse (China, Portugal and Sweden). Efforts are under way in several States to elaborate and/or adopt laws to address violence against women (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belize, Cameroon, Italy, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Paraguay and Russian Federation) or the protection of children from violence (Syrian Arab Republic).

10. Civil protection orders, which provide for the removal of perpetrators from a joint place of residence in cases of domestic violence, and the imposition of restrictions upon their behaviour, are available or are under way in an increasing

number of States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Japan, Mauritius, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland). Some States have strengthened the remedy of protection orders, including by expanding the period of time covered by the order (Austria); extending the application beyond married couples (France) and to cases of child abuse (Netherlands) and stalking (Austria and Italy); and extending the right to apply for a protection order to persons other than the victim/survivor (Austria and Bulgaria). The Netherlands reported that approximately 2,100 temporary restraining orders against perpetrators of domestic violence were imposed in 2009. A special centre registering protection orders was established in Chile, and in Finland instructions have been elaborated to strengthen police procedures related to protection orders.

11. A noteworthy trend has been the adoption of legislation regarding harmful practices. A number of States have adopted or are in the process of adopting such legislation, including in relation to female genital mutilation/cutting (Cameroon, Djibouti, Iceland and Norway), early and forced marriage (Bulgaria and Norway), and demand for dowry (Cameroon). The Syrian Arab Republic repealed the defence for so-called "honour" crimes from its criminal code, while Iceland increased penalties for aggravating circumstances in respect of female genital mutilation/cutting. Legislation on harmful practices, particularly with regard to female genital mutilation/cutting, may create extraterritorial jurisdiction, in the light of the fact that these forms of violence may be committed across borders.

12. States have adopted or amended criminal procedure codes or related laws to better protect and assist victims/survivors of violence during legal proceedings. Such measures include the possibility to be heard by an official of the same sex in all stages of proceedings (Switzerland); the provision of legal and psychological assistance (Austria, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Mauritius, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain and Sweden); the availability of information to victims/survivors related to the progress of their cases and their rights to damages and the obtaining of a protection order (Iceland, Georgia, Norway and Sweden); the removal of the perpetrator from court during the testimony of the victim and the exclusion of the public from court (Iceland); speedy judicial procedures (Portugal); special measures to support victims in giving evidence (Canada, Cyprus, Sweden and Switzerland); and the participation of non-governmental organizations in judicial proceedings as a civil party (Djibouti). The lack of free legal aid for women victims of violence was identified as a particular barrier in some States to the victim's/survivor's access to justice.

13. In order to enhance the capacity of law enforcement officials to deal with violence against women and effectively implement the laws, training programmes were carried out for police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers and security forces in many countries (Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Iceland, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic and Uganda). Such initiatives were often carried out in cooperation with civil society and included a focus on investigation and prosecution of perpetrators, and enhancing knowledge of the causes and consequences of violence against women, national legislation and international standards. A range of training materials have been developed, and protocols and guidelines have been issued, including on investigation, prosecution and legal proceedings as well as

cooperation between different authorities (Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Spain, Sudan, Sweden and Uganda). States have established specialized centres for investigations (Portugal); specialized police and prosecution units, or staff within those units (Bahrain, Chile, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Paraguay, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland and Uganda); specialized courts or units within courts (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mauritius, Paraguay and Spain); and specialized units within ministries (Djibouti, Mexico and Samoa).

14. Evaluation of the effectiveness and implementation of laws is critical in order to identify areas for improvement. Several States have undertaken studies to review and evaluate their legislation (Australia, Belize, Mexico, Paraguay, Spain and Sudan). Some States, such as Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Spain, have put in place specific mechanisms to monitor the implementation of their legislation. These reviews and evaluations are often carried out in consultation with civil society. The effectiveness of specialized police and prosecutor units/staff and their contribution to more uniform practice and quality control was highlighted.

B. National action plans, strategies and national coordination mechanisms and collaboration

15. National action plans and strategies on violence against women provide an overarching framework which can enhance coordination among relevant sectors and provide timelines for activities. Numerous countries have adopted dedicated policies on violence against women in general (Bolivia, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Iceland, Paraguay, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Tunisia), or on a particular form of violence, such as domestic violence (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Lithuania, Mauritius, Netherlands and Norway), female genital mutilation/cutting (Belgium, Djibouti, Kenya and Senegal), forced marriage (Belgium and Norway) or sexual violence (Ecuador and Republic of Korea). These plans commonly include measures to prevent, investigate and prosecute violence against women; support and assist victims/survivors; develop laws; undertake research and collect data; train police, legal, health and other personnel; and promote cooperation among those involved in addressing violence against women. Some countries which have adopted or are developing their second or third national action plan have dedicated attention to new areas of focus, such as different forms of violence, including forced marriage or female genital mutilation/cutting, the justice system or children witnessing violence against women (Belgium, Iceland, France, Netherlands and Portugal). Indicators and timelines to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national action plans have been included in some plans, such as in Portugal. Some States have in place special institutions or mechanisms to regularly evaluate their national action plans, policies and activities (Belize, Norway, Spain and Sweden). Several States reported on strategies and programmes in other areas which can help to reduce women's vulnerability to violence, including those related to poverty reduction (Norway and Yemen), homelessness (Australia and Sweden) and unemployment (Belarus), and activities aimed at women's economic empowerment (Cameroon, Djibouti, Mauritius, Samoa and Senegal). A number of States are in the process of developing national action plans and/or dedicated policies on violence against women in general (Argentina, Australia, Italy,

Kenya, Senegal, Uganda and Venezuela), or on a particular form of violence, including female genital mutilation/cutting (Finland and Senegal), forced marriage (Sweden), stalking (Italy) and domestic violence (Belgium and Cyprus). Some States have or are developing plans of action and policies at the local level (Iceland, Mexico and Sudan). The need to translate strategies into concrete programmes and actions was stressed.

16. Incorporating targets and activities related to ending violence against women in national action plans on other issues reaffirms the important message that without addressing violence against women, other areas of national progress will suffer. Several Member States have incorporated, or are in the process of incorporating, in their national action plans on human rights provisions related to violence against women (Philippines), gender equality (Bolivia, Chile, Finland, Georgia, Japan, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland), advancement of women (Bahrain and Syrian Arab Republic), security (Finland) and reproductive health (Ecuador, Paraguay and Switzerland).

17. Dedicated national mechanisms have been established to tackle violence against women in general or a particular form of violence, such as domestic violence (Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, Mauritius and Portugal) or female genital mutilation/cutting (Djibouti, Kenya and Norway), and to improve coordination among different stakeholders (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain and Tunisia). These mechanisms often include multisectoral task forces and commissions, specialized units within ministries, or expert groups, and in many cases they consist of representatives of governmental bodies, parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations. Efforts to enhance collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders also include cooperation arrangements between different governmental authorities, national and regional conferences, training, events, and national working groups and networks (Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland and Yemen). A number of States highlighted the collaboration between the Government and civil society, in particular women's non-governmental organizations (Canada, Finland, Lithuania, Samoa, Spain and Sweden). Several States reported that there has been an increase in funding allocated for the implementation of national action plans and policies, and that collaboration among different governmental authorities has been strengthened (Australia, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Republic of Korea, Samoa and Sweden).

C. Prevention measures, including awareness-raising and capacity-building

18. In order to eliminate violence against women, States must not only punish perpetrators, but also undertake measures to prevent such violence. Engaging all stakeholders is necessary in order to change societal attitudes that condone violence against women and perpetuate gender inequality. An increasing range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, religious and community leaders, the media, the private sector, youth, men and boys and high-level government officials are increasingly engaged in initiatives to end violence against women (Belarus, Congo, Cyprus, France, Mauritius, Philippines, Serbia and Switzerland).

Campaigns to sensitize community and religious leaders were carried out in several States, including Cameroon, the Congo and Mauritius. States have used a range of methods to increase public awareness of, and sensitivity to, the issue of violence against women, and are increasingly basing these efforts on research findings or assessments, such as in Australia and Canada. In Bolivia (Plurinational State of) and Colombia, efforts were based on a specific communication strategy. A significant number of countries have organized national campaigns on awareness-raising and zero tolerance of violence against women (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Iceland, Paraguay, Slovakia, Spain and Syrian Arab Republic), including on domestic violence specifically (Bulgaria, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Sweden and Switzerland). Several campaigns were carried out in connection with annual commemorations of the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Belarus, Belize, China, Colombia, Congo, Dominican Republic, Japan, Lebanon, Mauritius, Philippines and Samoa). Some campaigns on domestic violence were inspired by the regional Council of Europe campaign (Azerbaijan and Cyprus). Campaigns on violence against women have been carried out at local levels, for example, in the Russian Federation. In several States, funding has been provided to non-governmental organizations and local authorities to carry out awareness-raising campaigns and prevention activities (Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Netherlands and Sweden). A number of States referred to international, regional and national conferences, seminars, trainings and other events that had been organized, often in collaboration with United Nations entities, to raise awareness of violence against women, national laws and international standards (Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belize, Canada, China, Netherlands, Philippines, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen). Training and seminars on gender issues, including violence against women, have been conducted for targeted groups, including peace-keeping personnel (Iceland and Sweden), parliamentarians, civil servants and non-governmental organizations (Cameroon, Djibouti and Kenya). Publications, brochures, websites, audio-visual material, social media, television/radio spots, and debates have been utilized in awareness-raising and information programmes. It was stressed that a single campaign is not sufficient to raise awareness and that the message has to be regularly repeated (Netherlands).

19. Several States undertook initiatives to inform victims/survivors and women at risk of violence of their rights, including helplines and websites, to encourage victims to seek assistance (France, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Portugal and Serbia) and legal clinics informing women of their rights (Belize). In Finland, Iceland and Norway, materials were translated into several languages. Some of these efforts aimed to reach particular groups of women, such as immigrants (Finland), internally displaced persons (Azerbaijan), indigenous women (Mexico) and foreign domestic workers (Lebanon).

20. Educational curricula and institutions provide an important opportunity and forum within which attitudes that perpetuate violence against women can be addressed and women's rights promoted. In several countries, training has been provided to sensitize teachers on violence against women, gender equality and human rights (Djibouti, Ecuador, Mexico, Slovakia, Spain and Turkmenistan). States have developed curricula and educational material on gender equality, respect for human rights and the elimination of violence against women (Iceland, Mexico and Spain), national principles for schools free of violence (Australia) and guidelines for

teachers and parents (Republic of Korea). Awareness-raising days and programmes to heighten awareness of violence against women and help students develop skills in building and sustaining respectful and non-violent relationships were organized in numerous countries (Australia, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Congo, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan and Switzerland).

21. The media is an important conduit of public opinion and can influence societal attitudes. Training journalists to report on violence against women in a gender-sensitive manner can help to dispel myths and create awareness of the issue among the general public. In some States, journalists have received training on violence against women (Bahrain, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay and Syrian Arab Republic). Special commissions and bodies to monitor the impact of gender and sexist stereotypes in the media on violence against women have been established, for example, in France and Spain.

22. The role of youth and men and boys in addressing violence against women has been recognized as a critical component of prevention efforts. An increasing number of Member States have undertaken efforts to sensitize and mobilize men, boys, teenagers and young adults on violence against women (Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Chile, Lebanon, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Samoa and Spain). These initiatives have included national campaigns, seminars, programmes and workshops, including on developing skills to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner, training of non-governmental organization personnel, creation of networks of male advocates, cooperation with the White Ribbon Campaign, and the participation of high-level officials in the Network of Men Leaders of the Secretary-General's global campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

23. A growing number of States have in place intervention programmes for perpetrators of violence against women aimed at changing their attitudes and behaviour (Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Chile, Cyprus, Iceland, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland). These programmes often include a diagnosis at an early stage and follow-up monitoring of perpetrators. In several States, guidelines have been developed for institutions in charge of such programmes (France), and funding has increased for their implementation (Belgium and Sweden) and for relevant research (Australia). Training programmes have also been carried out for staff dealing with the rehabilitation of perpetrators (Belize, Mauritius and Philippines).

24. States drew attention to some of the factors that perpetuate violence against women, including discriminatory laws, attitudes and practices. It was noted that although prevention measures had been intensified, their implementation continued to lack effectiveness. Some efforts have been made to identify gaps in prevention and to elaborate promising practices (Canada). In Norway, a special committee has been established to recommend prevention measures in relation to sexual assault.

D. Protection, support and services for victims/survivors

25. Victims/survivors of violence against women require timely access to support services that respond to short-term injuries, protect them from further violence, provide them with support, including legal advice, counselling and psychological

care, and address long-term needs, such as finding accommodation and employment. Support services are increasingly available to victims/survivors. A promising trend in service provision has been the establishment of centres, including mobile ones (Mexico), which provide a range of services for victims/survivors of violence against women in an integrated and coordinated manner in one location (Bahrain, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Indonesia, Lithuania, Mauritius, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic and Switzerland). Recognizing that civil society organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, have significant experience and expertise in providing services to victims/survivors of violence, a number of Member States have supported and financed the work of such organizations in providing services for victims/survivors of violence (Bulgaria, Iceland, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mexico, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden and Uganda). Referral mechanisms have been established in several States (Colombia, France and Netherlands). Efforts are under way in some States to enhance collaboration among stakeholders dealing with individual cases of violence (Finland, Lithuania and Netherlands). The Dominican Republic and Mexico have developed an inventory of support services, shelters and centres for victims/survivors, and Argentina is in the process of mapping out such services. Many support services are, however, only available in central locations.

26. Shelters and safe houses are more widely available for victims/survivors of different forms of violence and for different groups of victims/survivors, such as domestic workers, women with disabilities, women migrants and children victims/witnesses of violence (Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)). National hotlines or help lines that provide information, often in several languages, counselling, support and referral services for victims/survivors of violence are in place in a growing number of countries (Australia, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, France, Georgia, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)). In several countries, support services include financial assistance (Mauritius and Republic of Korea), and assistance in finding long-term housing (Australia, Chile, Portugal and Republic of Korea) and employment (Mauritius). Other developments in service provision include the provision of child care (Republic of Korea), vocational training (Congo, Senegal and Serbia), post-violence kits and prophylaxis (Sudan), medical treatment and psychological support at hospitals for victims/survivors of violence (Congo and Kenya), free legal aid (Cameroon, Chile, Congo and Uganda), establishment of support groups at community level (Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)), specialized services for indigenous women victims of violence (Mexico), and efforts to improve assistance to internally displaced women victims of violence (Colombia).

27. In some countries, evaluation or studies concerning shelters for women victims of violence were carried out (Finland, Netherlands and Switzerland). Spain has put in place a system of quality control in respect of health and social services for women victims/survivors of violence.

28. Training and projects to build capacity and raise awareness of staff dealing with cases of violence against women, including medical and health staff, were organized in numerous States, and training materials, including handbooks and manuals, were also elaborated (Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Sudan, Switzerland and Syrian Arab Republic). Such initiatives often involved a wide spectrum of stakeholders, and some focused on the needs of different groups of women victims of violence, such as women from ethnic minority groups, while others facilitated the exchange of experience among neighbouring countries. In order to support the work of social services and staff working with victims/survivors, a number of States developed standard operating procedures, guidelines and tools on case management and good practices, and also issued protocols and regulations (Bulgaria, Canada, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Indonesia, Italy, Mauritius, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Slovakia, Sudan and Sweden).

E. Data collection and analysis

29. Solid data on violence against women are critical to the development and implementation of sound laws, policies, strategies and prevention measures. Some Member States indicated that cases of domestic violence reported to police had increased (Cyprus and Portugal). Attention was drawn to certain groups of women who continue to be exposed to higher levels of violence, such as young women (Italy), or ethnic minorities (Norway). A number of States emphasized the continuing challenge of the lack of data on violence against women, including the lack of uniform data collection systems and lack of disaggregated data (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Iraq, Senegal, Switzerland and Yemen).

30. The collection of data must be systematic, disaggregated by demographic factors such as sex, age and ethnicity, and conducted in a gender-sensitive manner by interviewers familiar with the nature of violence against women. The most comprehensive manner of collecting data on such violence is by conducting a dedicated population-based survey on violence against women. Several Member States have undertaken dedicated surveys on violence against women, some of them on a regular basis, and with a permanent funding, in relation to the prevalence, reasons and consequences of violence against women, and attitudes of the population towards such violence (Australia, Canada, Djibouti, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland and Syrian Arab Republic). Several Member States have collected data on violence against women through a module attached to other population-based surveys, such as national demographic and health surveys (Philippines and Switzerland) and crime and victimization surveys (Canada, Paraguay and Sweden).

31. Administrative statistics, such as numbers of cases reported to police and charges laid, or the number of admissions to hospitals or shelters of victims/survivors of violence, also provide a source of information on the prevalence and severity of violence against women. Several States reported on measures taken to enhance the collection and analysis of administrative data by police, prosecutors and other relevant authorities (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Finland, Portugal, Serbia and

Switzerland). A promising trend in the collection of administrative data has been the creation of national databases/registries and unified data collection systems on violence against women, as is the case in several countries (Cyprus, Ecuador, Mexico and Philippines).

32. States have strengthened efforts to develop national capacity to collect accurate data on violence against women, including specialized training events for statisticians and the adoption of guidelines and rules for data collection. In a number of countries, observatories have been established to collect and analyse data and information on violence against women, to identify gaps and propose new policies (Argentina, Congo, Paraguay and Spain). National indicators on violence against women, safety of women and children, and access of victims/survivors to justice have also been developed (Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Colombia, Finland and Republic of Korea). A seminar on data collection techniques for cases of sexual violence was held in the Congo, while in Sweden a methodology to collect data on violence against women in national crime victim surveys was developed.

33. Studies and research on violence against women provide important inputs into policy development processes. Some States have undertaken studies to assess the economic impact of violence against women (Australia, Portugal and Switzerland), with one estimate suggesting that violence costs the country $13.6 billion per annum (Australia). A specialized centre engaged in research and development of guidelines and training has been established in Norway, and research and studies have been carried out in numerous States, including by non-governmental organizations, and often with the support of United Nations entities (Bahrain, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic and Uganda). A comprehensive study was carried out in Yemen in 2008 on the scope, causes and consequences of violence against women and its different forms, and included gaps in laws and policies and recommendations for further action.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

34. Many actions have been taken by Member States to prevent and address violence against women. States have strengthened their national legal, policy and institutional frameworks as well as the coordination among a range of different stakeholders. Good practices have been identified and should be replicated and used as the basis for designing and implementing better laws, policies and programmes. Implementation of all measures taken, including ensuring adequate resources, together with monitoring and evaluation of their impact, should be a main focus for further action.

35. Many States have carried out legal reform to address violence against women. States have introduced new criminal offences and increased penalties, broadened definitions of violence against women, and expanded the scope of protection and support for victims/survivors. A promising practice has been the adoption of comprehensive legislation on violence against women, which not only criminalizes such violence, but also mandates support and protection for victims/survivors, prevention measures, funding and the creation of institutional mechanisms. These efforts should continue and be reinforced in order to ensure that a comprehensive and consistent legal foundation exists to

prevent and address violence against women and promote women's human rights. States should ensure that training for law enforcement officials, the judiciary and other relevant personnel on violence against women is systematic, and that criminal justice processes and procedures are gender-sensitive and protect the rights of the complainants/survivors and enhance their safety. States should continue to establish specialized police, prosecution units and other mechanisms and ensure specialized training for their staff. Civil protection orders, civil law suits and other legal remedies should be available to complainants/survivors to complement criminal measures. States should ensure that all barriers to the access of victims/survivors to justice are removed, including ensuring free legal aid, interpretation and court support in all legal proceedings. Accountability mechanisms should be put in place, such as penalties for non-compliance with the law.

36. States have adopted national action plans/dedicated policies on violence against women, or on a particular form of violence, and established institutional mechanisms to address violence against women and ensure coordination among different stakeholders. States should ensure that such plans and policies are comprehensive and multidisciplinary in scope, incorporate measurable goals and timetables, monitoring and accountability measures, provide for impact assessments, and ensure coordination of action and clear roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders. Coordination mechanisms should continue to be strengthened. States should ensure that all policies and strategies on violence against women are translated into concrete action and adequately funded.

37. The availability of services for victims/survivors of violence has increased. A promising trend which should be replicated has been the establishment of centres that provide a range of services in one location, including counselling, shelter and medical and legal services. Such centres should be extended throughout the country, including rural areas. States should ensure that support and services are adequately resourced and available to all victims/survivors, including those in rural and remote areas. All professionals handling cases of violence against women should be systematically trained. Referral mechanisms should be reinforced and information about the availability of existing services should be broadly disseminated.

38. Efforts have been made to improve collection of data on violence against women, including a growing number of population-based surveys to assess the prevalence of violence against women and the creation of national databases. The availability of more and better quality information, including statistical data, is crucial. Such information allows policymakers to undertake effective legislative and policy reforms, ensure adequate provision of targeted and effective services, monitor trends and progress in addressing and eliminating violence against women, and assess the impact of measures taken. States should continue and reinforce their efforts. Statistical data should be gathered at regular intervals on the causes, consequences and frequency of all forms of violence against women, and on the effectiveness of measures to prevent and address such violence. Statistical data should be disaggregated by sex, race, age, ethnicity and other relevant characteristics. States should intensify their efforts to build the capacity of statisticians to collect data on violence against women in a gender-sensitive manner, and adopt guidelines and rules for uniform data

collection. Qualitative research should be intensified to facilitate improved understanding and more effective strategies to eliminate violence against women.

39. Despite impressive efforts by numerous countries around the world, women continue to be subjected to many different forms of violence, and new forms are constantly evolving. Thus, a stronger focus must be placed on prevention, to complement more effectively the improved laws, policies and programmes and their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These efforts should be rigorously evaluated to gain a better understanding of their impact and effectiveness, including when they form part of a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women. The information and awareness-raising campaigns, educational programmes and other initiatives aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women carried out by States should be reinforced to ensure that they are systematic, sustained and extended throughout all areas of the country, and target particular groups of women, such as immigrants, rural and indigenous women, women from ethnic minorities, and women with disabilities. Political commitment and leadership at all levels are vital and should be complemented by a broad range of partnerships and the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including Governments, civil society and in particular women's organizations, community and religious leaders, international organizations and the private sector. Environments and communities must be safe for women and girls, and efforts to end violence against women must be pursued with the full involvement of men and boys. Empowering women and strengthening their economic independence, and eliminating discrimination against them in law and in practice are critical. Educational curricula at all levels should promote gender equality and women's human rights and condemn violence against women. Advocacy campaigns and programmes, including with the participation of the media, should focus on increasing public awareness of the unacceptability of violence against women, raising women's awareness of their rights and available remedies and support, and tackling gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women. Such campaigns and programmes should be directed at the general public as well as particular groups. Informational materials should be available in multiple languages, as needed. Prevention activities should extend to sports organizations/clubs, youth organizations and special programmes in schools and include efforts aimed at building skills in the development of respectful relations.